

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Chairman, I yield time to enter into a colloquy with the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. SHULER).

Mr. SHULER. Mr. Chairman, I rise today on behalf of myself and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP).

In 1941, the United States was building up for World War II in dire need of new sources of energy. The Tennessee Valley Authority obtained Federal authority for construction of a hydroelectric dam in Swain County, North Carolina. This construction required that an important road be flooded. In a 1943 agreement, the Federal Government promised to rebuild the road.

In the 64 years since the agreement was signed, no road has been completed and no settlement was offered to the people of Swain County. The 2001 Transportation bill provided \$16 million to study the environmental costs of building this new road. The National Park Service will complete this study in September.

□ 1700

Mr. Chairman, the financial and economical costs are too high to build this road. The National Park Service has said that the final environmental impact study will recommend a cash settlement with the people of Swain County.

Senators ALEXANDER and DOLE have amended the Senate version of this bill with language to allow the Park Service to use remaining funds from this study for this solution. This common-sense solution enjoys strong bipartisan support in the North Carolina and Tennessee House delegations.

Mr. Chairman, would you be willing to work with me and Congressman WAMP to ensure that this bipartisan language is included in the final conference version of this bill?

Mr. OLVER. I would like to thank the gentleman for bringing this issue to our attention.

Sixty-four years is a long and, it seems, quite unreasonable time to wait for the government to resolve this issue. So I pledge to work with you both on this issue as we move forward in this process and conference this bill with the Senate.

Mr. SHULER. Thank you, and I would like to thank my colleague ZACK WAMP for his hard work along with this bill, and I certainly thank the chairman for your hard work and your dedication.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Chairman, I yield now to Mr. CROWLEY from New York also for a colloquy.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this legislation and want to commend you and the ranking member and your staffs for the hard work that has been put into this bill. I would also like to engage you, as you mentioned, in a colloquy.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased the committee included \$15.8 million to hire

and train new air traffic controllers. This will go a long way in helping to ensure the safety of our skies. However, I believe that more needs to be done.

I note that we have 1,100 fewer fully certified air traffic controllers than we did on 9/11.

Mr. Chairman, my concerns were underscored by a recent incident at La Guardia Airport, which is in my district in the Seventh Congressional District in Queens. As you know, La Guardia Airport is one of the busiest airports in the Nation. Over 1,000 flights a day and 27 million passengers a year frequent the airport.

On July 5 of this year, two planes nearly crashed on the runway. While a catastrophe was narrowly avoided this time, many questions remain as to the cause of the incident, including whether it was due to a staffing shortage, a lack of well-qualified air traffic controllers, or simply pure human error.

I believe we must examine the incident at La Guardia while we also examine the larger issue, which is determining how we must address the impending air traffic controller shortage. That is why I believe that Congress must fund a study by the National Academy of Sciences.

This study would examine what factors are contributing to air traffic safety concerns, including human factors, increased traffic activity, and the technology and equipment at our Nation's airports. Ultimately the report will recommend how to address this issue, particularly with regard to staffing standards and whether we need to train more air traffic controllers.

I intended to offer an amendment today to fund this study, but it would have been subject to a point of order. So instead, Mr. Chairman, I am hoping we can agree to work together as this legislation moves forward to find a way to address this issue and potentially fund this study.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Chairman, this is a vital public safety concern that we must address. I understand that the FAA has been working with the National Academy of Sciences and has factored in many of its recommendations from the Academy. The FAA is also working with Mitre algorithms, models and base assumptions.

I, too, want to ensure that the skies remain safe, and I will work with the gentleman to ensure an adequate number of controllers exist in that area.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, if I could just respond, I want to thank the chairman, and as you know, if we don't address this issue, the next incident at La Guardia may not be a near miss, but rather a tragedy, one that I hope we would avoid. And I would imagine if it were a tragedy, we would be having a different conversation than this colloquy.

I appreciate the gentleman for his time.

AMENDMENT NO. 21 OFFERED BY MR. HENSARLING

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 21 offered by Mr. HENSARLING:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. 410. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used for parking facilities.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the order of the House of today, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Chairman, this amendment is aimed at limiting funding for parking facilities within this bill, which is not including Federal facilities that might be included within bills dealing with our military bases, GAO, national parks, what have you.

Mr. Chairman, apparently there are about 15 or so of these earmarks covering Members of both parties, and again, as I said earlier, Mr. Chairman, I know that the funds represented are probably a small portion of Federal spending, but I think it is good, I think it is wise that this House pause from time to time and look at the fiscal challenge that we are facing and to remember, if everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority.

So, again, I have no doubt that parking facilities are needed all over America, but I doubt the wisdom within the confines of this bill of using Federal taxpayer money today to pay for them.

Let's take a look at the challenge that we're facing, Mr. Chairman, and just don't take my word for the fact that we have a great fiscal challenge. Let's listen to our Federal Reserve Chairman, Ben Bernanke. He said recently, without "early and meaningful action" to address spending in Washington, "the U.S. economy could be seriously weakened; with future generations bearing much of the cost."

Let's listen to the Brookings Institute, not exactly a bastion of conservative thought: "The authors of this book believe that the Nation's fiscal situation is out of control and could do serious damage to the economy in coming decades."

Let's listen to the General Accountability Office: The rising costs of government spending, specifically entitlements, are "a fiscal cancer" that threatens "catastrophic consequences for our country" and could "bankrupt America."

Let's listen again to the GAO: "Absent policy changes on the spending and/or revenue sides of the budget, a growing imbalance between expected Federal spending and tax revenues will mean escalating and ultimately unsustainable Federal deficits and debt